



Ambassador John Berry – Interfaith Picnic

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**Ambassador Berry Hosts an Interfaith Picnic  
Welcome Remarks**

*(As prepared for delivery, October 31, 2015)*

Welcome to the U.S. embassy, welcome to my home. It is an honor to welcome each of you here today.

*As-Salam Aleykum, Shalom, Namaste, Allah-u-Abha, Sat Sri Akaal, Peace be with you.*

Thank you to BlueStar Intercultural Centre and Fethullah Erdogan for bringing us all together.

Throughout time – people everywhere have asked important questions:

Why are we here? From where do we come? What happens when we die?

How can we live a good and just life? What rules and values should guide us?

These are questions that have been best answered by faith and philosophy.

The answers are as diverse as are the people of the earth. But, what is amazing is how similar are many answers to those questions – regardless of time, geography, or race.

The great spiritual and religious traditions of the world all deeply value the importance of love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and peace.

Drawing from my own tradition, the greatest Christian commandment is “to love God with your whole heart, and your neighbor as yourself.” And, this simple message finds harmony and common chords in all religions of the world.

There have always been and always will be those who use the name of God to perpetrate hate, division, and evil. It is always important for people of faith to stand up, speak out, and live our lives in a way that reflects the full and true grace and mercy of our respective faiths; and protects each of our rights to worship as our hearts lead us.

I thank each of you for your leadership and commitment to promoting tolerance and peace through faith. I look forward to our time together today.

May God bless us and sustain us.